

(1) Taliban Behind...

perpetrator of this incident is the Taliban."

He described Taliban as a group which has disrupted Afghanistan's security with "cruelty" and a group which is taking the lives of civilians and has many times taken responsibility for "such heinous acts".

Abdullah said Taliban is a group which does not have "the courage" of face-to-face talks but it has "the cruelty" of conducting terror acts.

He also said that "any country which has given sanctuary to the Taliban and is giving safe haven to the group and are supporting them, are behind the attack".

"The "Taliban" crime syndicate must know that with every attack they carry out against our people our resolve is further strengthened to eliminate them.

Their conduct is a disgrace to the very notion of peace," Abdullah tweeted on Tuesday morning.

At least 43 people were killed, and 10 others were wounded after a group of attackers stormed a government building in Kabul on Monday, spokesman for Ministry of Public Health, Wahid Majrooh confirmed.

On Monday afternoon, a number of attackers stormed a government building in downtown Kabul - few kilometers in the east of the green zone where diplomatic offices are located - at around 3pm Kabul time on Monday.

The attack started with a car bomb explosion near the Ministry of Public Works and the National Authority for People with Disabilities and Martyrs' Families in Kabul's PD16 - near Makroyan-e-Kohna colony.

Three attackers then started gunshots and entered the building of the National Authority for People with Disabilities and Martyrs' Families.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in a statement condemned the attack and said the Mission is actively working to verify information indicating scores of civilians, including women, were killed and injured in a coordinated attack in and around government offices.

"These attacks cause untold human suffering to Afghan families," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, head of UNAMA. "The United Nations unequivocally condemns them, as there is no justification whatsoever for such attacks."

Taliban has rejected involvement in the attack. (Tolo news)

(2) US Envoy...

Khalilzad visited the region twice in the recent months for negotiations with the Taliban, but he avoided going to New Delhi both times. This time around, the envoy will attend India's foreign policy dialogue, scheduled for January 8-10.

Last week, after a brief stay in Islamabad, Khalilzad flew to Kabul to brief senior Afghan leaders, including President Ashraf Ghani, on his meetings with Taliban in Abu Dhabi. (Pajhwok)

(3) Perpetrators...

a coordinated attack in and around government offices.

"These attacks cause untold human suffering to Afghan families," Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA was quoted as saying. "The United Nations unequivocally condemns them, as there is no justification whatsoever for such attacks."

The United Nations maintains that those who have organized and enabled such attacks must be brought to justice and held to account, and once again calls on all parties to uphold their obligations under international humanitarian law, at all times, to protect civilians from harm, the source said.

The United Nations continues to stand with all Afghans in solidarity and remains committed to an Afghan-led peace process that will end the ongoing war and enable the government to allocate more resources to protect all its citizens from such atrocities, it added.

On behalf of the United Nations in Af-

ghanistan, Yamamoto expresses deep condolences to the families of the victims and wishes a speedy recovery of the injured, the statement concluded. (Pajhwok)

(4) Fi2 Rising...

official, who said NEPA had carried out an investigation into corrosive particles in Kabul -- more than 300 microns. Serious measures are needed to prevent the burning of coal.

"Zero to 10 Microns in a cubic metre shows completely clean air. Fifty to 100 mean half-clean air The current level (300) in Kabul City which is half-healthy and harmful for health," he informed.

He noted these measures should be taken by NEPA, Minister of Public Health and Minister of Interior, when the suspended particles were rising from 300 microns, then serious steps must be taken in this regard.

Homayoon asked the people suffering from respiratory problems, including elderly men, pregnant women and youth with low hemoglobin count either to avoid going outside or wear facemasks.

He informed pollutants included carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide that led to mental retardation, abortion sand loss of hearing in children.

Syed Ehsan Adeli, doctor at a private hospital in Kabul, told Pajhwok seasonal diseases occurred all over the world, but air pollution damaged respiratory system, causing citizens to suffer from chest, ear and throat pains. He also advised the use of masks.

Haroon Ayubi, a dweller of the capital, called rising air pollution a grave concern for families, if the pollution level was not brought down soon, he warned, the city would become dirtier.

He acknowledged: "These days, the air pollution level is alarmingly high, but the government is not paying attention to the issue." Non-standard heating systems had been activated in high-rise housing projects in the capital, he noted.

Abdul Baqi, a resident of Baghlan province who sells untreated coal in Khair Khana, said he brought coal from the Dara-i-Sauf district of Samangan province to Kabul.

People were not resourceful enough to buy clean energy sources, he argued, urging the government to provide better living conditions for citizens. (Pajhwok)

(5) China, Pakistan...

reconciliation is the only realistic way," the ministry said in its short statement quoted in a report by Reuters.

"The two sides welcome the various efforts made by all parties and are willing to maintain close communication and strategic coordination," the statement said.

Reuters report says that Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, speaking at a daily news briefing, reiterated the statement and did not answer a question on whether the meeting was connected to the US troop withdrawal.

Wang visited Kabul earlier this month, where he pledged to help Afghanistan and Pakistan overcome their long-standing suspicions of each other.

Pakistan Foreign Minister and his delegation met with President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul on Monday where the two sides discussed Afghanistan-Pakistan relations, bilateral issues, Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process and next steps after intra-Afghan talks, the Presidential Palace said.

Qureshi said he had productive meetings with Afghan leaders. (Tolo news)

(6) Peace Talks Can...

constructive role.

"The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is an effective instrument for stability and corporation in our larger region. And we're glad that all the three major powers of the region -- China, Russia, India, are part of it. So is Pakistan, so are countries of central Asia -- Turkey as well and Iran. And Afghanistan is an observer. So India's joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, we see it as a positive development and we hope that through the cooperative working

within this organization, Afghanistan will be one of the first beneficiaries of Shanghai Cooperation Organization," Karzai said.

According to Karzai, the superpower countries in the region, such as China and Russia, can play effective roles in the Afghan peace process.

Parliament Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimy meanwhile said a national consensus should be established in relation to peace talks.

"When they (Afghan delegation) go to a specific address outside Afghanistan where talks are supposed to be held, and when they are stayed out of the door, it damages the stance and reputation of the Afghan government and Afghan people," said Ibrahimy.

Karzai said that Afghan people want to expand their cooperation with Pakistan and China and he hopes the friendship between these three nations strengthen the fights against insurgency.

Karzai's remarks come as US officials met Taliban representatives last week in Abu Dhabi over the Afghan peace talks where Taliban said they cannot win by warfare and want a political settlement in Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

(7) Iran, Afghanistan...

"The Chabahar Day Meeting", in order to develop trade and transit of Chabahar port with the participation of Iran, India and Afghanistan along with Central Asian countries, will be held on 26th February 2019 in Chabahar port.

"The Tripartite Transit Agreement between Iran, India and Afghanistan aims at expediting, facilitating and promoting the transit of Chabahar, connecting India and Afghanistan to the countries of Central Asia through the Chabahar port, developing exports of the three countries, and establishing an international corridor between the countries, was signed by the presidents of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Afghanistan and the Prime Minister of India in June of 2016," he said.

"According to the agreement between the three countries, the IPGL Company, as Chabahar Port Operator, is responsible for the discharge, supply and marketing activities," the official said.

Economic and political representatives of India, Afghanistan and Iran, in addition to holding meetings to review the obstacles and important solutions for the implementation of the Chabahar Port agreement, in addition to visiting different parts of the Shahid Beheshti port, also visited the facilities of the Chabahar port, and learned about the port's investment, commercial and transit opportunities. (Trend)

(8) Work on Kandahar...

the contract, otherwise the provincial government would officially complain to the central government.

He said not only they would complain to the central government but would introduce officials of the relevant companies to the Attorney General Office (AGO).

Provincial Council chief Haji Syed Jan Khakrezwal told Pajhwok that installation of the first solar power project (10 megawatt) was being done by Zolaristan firm and the second project (30 megawatt) was equally divided (15mw each) between Zolaristan and a Turkish company.

He said the Turkish company was working well and would complete its part of the project soon but the Zolaristan firm had been slow.

Kandahar Breshna Shirkat director Amanullah Farooqi said it was a few months back when relevant projects officials promised to accelerate installation of the solar power plants.

He said the power utility had completed installation of power pylons and extension of cables and other affairs, but the relevant companies were yet to meet their promises.

The power utility head added therefore the contracted companies officials were asked to attend the meeting at the governor's house and were informed to step up their work.

Farooqi said thousands of acres of land had been specified for the 30mw

solar power plant in limits of the airport in Damani district and thousands of acres more land for the 10mw project in front of the textile factory in the same district.

According to him, the 30mw project worth \$39 million is funded by the Afghan government and the Under the contract these companies would sell electricity to Da Afghanistan Breshna Shirka (DABS) cheaply for 20 years and after completion of the term, the projects will be handed over to the power utility.

The 10mw solar power plant installation will cost \$19 million. USAID is contributing \$10 million and the remaining \$9 million by Zolaristan company to this project.

Work on the projects resumed in September 24, 2017 after a long delay and the company promised to complete the installation in August, 2018.

The power utility director grumbled the projects work remained slow-paced despite continued stress to finish them early.

The completion of these projects will resolve the power shortage issue at the industrial park.

Currently, the industrial park in Kandahar is supplied electricity for 10 hours a day, including eight megawatts delivered by diesel run generators, which is not enough.

Referring to power supply from Kajaki dam in Helmand province, Farooqi said due to lack of water in the dam, power generation turbines had stopped and residents were only supplied a few hours electricity in 48 hours from diesel run generators.

He said the entire country was suffering from drought, especially the southern zone, and it had resulted in 70 meters decrease in water at the Kajaki dam.

Deputy head of industrialist union Faizl Haq Mushkani said the lack of electricity remained a major challenge for all residents of Kandahar, especial industrials.

He said due to the shortage of power only half of the 154 factories were operating and the rest closed.

On the other hand, residents of Kandahar said the lack of electricity has a negative impact on their lives as they have long been facing the issue. (Pajhwok)

(9) Many Girls in...

solution to the problem.

Nadia, a girl, said she stopped going to school after passing the 7th class due to strong criticism of her family. She said her brothers, and uncles forced her to stop going to school after passing the 7th class.

"I tried to convince my family to allow me to school, but they said it was a wrong practice, people would say a virgin girl is going to school and would say many other insulting things," she said.

Nadia said she was finally succeeded to get permission to continue her education and now she was a university student after successfully completing her high school.

Haji Akhtar Mohammad, a tribal elder in Chamtal district, said due to lack of female teachers, families did not want to send their girls to school. He said families allowed their girls to joint attend classes with boys until class fifth but not after that.

"Compared to the past, people's mind set has changed and now most families want their children to go to school."

A provincial council member of Balkh, Tahira Hajjo, said that security problems, lack of female teachers and illiteracy were reasons people did not let their girls go to schools in districts.

She said girls who could not attend school faced many problems when they grew up. She criticized the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women activists for not discharging their responsibilities towards the problem.

"We see programs about women rights in the city hotels every day, but there are no much problems in cities, the attention should be paid to districts," Hajjo said.

She added public awareness programs about women should be held in districts of the province instead of cities.

Hajjo asked the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs to encourage people through mosques and imams to send their children including girls to school.

"Women who are educated are much happier in their lives than those who are uneducated", she said.

Balkh education director Aliullah Amiri acknowledged girls in districts of the province rarely completed their education.

He said his department had taken steps for identifying real obstacles to girls' education and finding solutions to them.

He said teams had been sent to districts to find how many girls were out of school and why.

"Some families do not allow even their minor girls to get education", he added.

Besides negative traditions, lack of female teachers in schools is another reason that girls leave their education, Amiri said.

He said efforts were on to increase the number of female teachers and encourage girls to attend schools. He added that the lack of a safe educational environment in some districts also caused some families not to allow their girls to go to schools.

"Most of our schools in districts do not have surrounding walls, it is a serious problem, but the education department is working for solving this issue," he added.

Amiri said families would be encouraged to let their girls attend schools through parents' councils of students.

An Islamic scholar, Mualvi Ziauddin Hanafi said that education was mandatory for both men and women in Islam.

He said it was responsibility of the government to provide a safe educational environment and pay attention to girls' education. (Pajhwok)

(10) Azerbaijan Receives...

Nine trucks left Afghanistan's Herat city on December 13 and arrived in Baku along this corridor Dec. 25. The total volume of cargo is 175 tons.

The cargoes are transported via trains and vehicles through Afghanistan's Torghundi city in Herat province and supplied to Turkmenistan's Ashgabat city and from there to the Turkmenbashi International Sea Port, as part of the Lapis Lazuli international route.

The corridor stretches to Azerbaijan's Baku city, then through Georgia's Tbilisi city to Turkey's Ankara city with branches to Georgian Poti and Batumi, then from Ankara to Istanbul. The project budget, which aims at facilitating transit logistics and simplification of customs procedures, is estimated at \$2 billion.

The large-scale project is aimed at increasing the economic integration of the region and increasing the trade volumes. (Trend)

(11) Nangarhar...

Khewa, Batikot and Behsud districts this year.

He said so far 94.652 metric tons of gur had been produced so far and besides Nangarhar the gur was sold to buyers in Kunar, Laghman, Kabul and other provinces.

He said the locally produced gur had almost replaced the Pakistani gur because it was fondly bought at home.

A shopkeeper in Jalalabad, who was selling gur, said previously they sold Pakistani gur, but now every customer used to ask about local gur.

He said the locally produced gur had a good taste and was pure and free from chemicals.

Agriculture experts say besides Nangarhar the environment in other eastern provinces suits sugarcane, which was abundantly produced in the region in the past.

Attiquallah Obaidyani, who agriculture faculty teacher at the Nangarhar University, said Nangarhar farmers were historically familiar with sugarcane production, but they needed government assistance in using good seed.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan Labor Union head Dr. Mohammad Liaqat Adil said workers at Ganis were subjected to heavy labor for long hours but paid low wages. (Pajhwok)